

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 00440 181007Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 PC-01 OMB-01
TRSE-00 AID-05 IO-13 /073 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8790
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 440

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, KS
SUBJ: PRISONER RELEASE NEGOTIATIONS--CURRENT STATUS

1. REV. PAK HYONG-KYU, PRINCIPAL NEGOTIATOR FOR DISSIDENTS ON PRISONER RELEASE ISSUE, GAVE EMBOFF BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON STEPS RELATING TO FREEING OF MYONGDONG PRISONERS IN LATE DECEMBER AND CURRENT STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN DISSIDENTS AND ROKG. ACCORDING TO REV. PAK, NEGOTIATORS FOR BOTH SIDES COULD NOT AGREE ON WORDING FOR STATEMENT TO BE SIGNED BY PRISONERS AS CONDITION FOR RELEASE. DISSIDENTS ASSUMED PASSIVE POSTURE WAITING FOR INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE TO BUILD ON ROKG AND FORCE ROKG TO GRANT ADDITIONAL CONCESSIONS ON PHRASEOLOGY IF RELEASES WERE TO BE ACHIEVED BY YEAR'S END. HOWEVER, FATHER HAM SE-UNG SIGNED THE KCIA WORDED STATEMENT AND WAS RELEASED AT CHRISTMAS.-A DEVELOPMENT REV. PAK FELT REDUCED PRESSURE ON THE ROKG. HE THEN DECIDED TO ACCEPT THE KCIA DRAFT STATEMENT AND PRESENT IT TO THE REMAINING MYONGDONG PRISONERS EXCEPT KIM TAE-CHUNG. HE OBTAINED THEIR SIGNATURES IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING CHRISTMAS, AND THEY WERE RELEASED DECEMBER 31.

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2. REV. PAK SAID HE HESITATES TO GO TO KIM TAE-CHUNG WITH THE STATEMENT BECAUSE KIM IS A POLITICAL FIGURE AND MIGHT SUFFER AT LEAST TEMPORARY LOSS OF REPUTATION IF HIS SIGNATURE WERE CONSTRUED BY THE PUBLIC AS A "DEAL" WITH THE REGIME. REV. PAK ALSO FEELS THAT THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE MIGHT FORCE THE ROKG TO RELEASE KIM WITHOUT ANY STATEMENT. HOWEVER, IF KIM IS

NOT RELEASED BY THE END OF JANUARY, REV. PAK WILL LIKELY APPROACH HIM AND ASK HIM TO SIGN FOR THE SAKE OF THE DISSIDENTS AND NOT THAT OF THE ROKG.

3. REV. PAK SAID THE KCIA TOLD HIM THAT ALMOST ALL REMAINING EM-9 PRISONERS HAVE NOW SIGNED STATEMENTS AND THEIR RELEASE IS IMMINENT. HE HAD HEARD RUMORS THAT THEY WOULD BE RELEASED ON JANUARY 20. IF THEY ARE NOT RELEASED BY THE END OF JANUARY, HE WILL CONTACT THE KCIA TO FIND OUT WHAT THE SNAG IS.

4. REV. PAK SAID HE AND OTHER DISSIDENTS STILL HARBORED GREAT DISTRUST OF THE ROKG. IN THIS CASE, HOWEVER, HE HAD BEEN PLEASANTLY SURPRISED THAT THE KCIA KEPT ITS WORD ON NOT PUBLICIZING THE FACT THAT THE FREED PRISONERS HAD SIGNED STATEMENTS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THEIR RELEASE. HE COULD NOT BE SURE THAT RELEASES WOULD FOLLOW AS AGREED, BUT HE FELT THERE WAS A GOOD POSSIBILITY THEY WOULD.

5. THE EMBASSY HAS OBSERVED NO INDICATIONS FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT ROKG PLANNING LARGE SCALE RELEASES IN NEAR TERM. REV. PAK'S TIME FRAME MAY BE OFF, BUT WE DOUBT KCIA WOULD ASSUME HIM THAT PRISONERS WOULD BE RELEASED, IF IT DID NOT MEAN IT.
SNEIDER

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